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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001290

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Peace Process Update: Discussion of latest GSL proposal re north/east intensifies; Tigers stir the pot

Refs: (A) FBIS Reston Va DTG 230531Z Jul 03

- (B) FBIS Reston Va DTG 230518Z Jul 03
- (C) FBIS Reston Va DTG 220532Z Jul 03
- (D) Colombo 1284, and previous

(U) Classified by James F. Entwistle, Charge d'Affaires.  
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

11. (C) This update of Sri Lanka's peace process reviews the following:

>> Norwegian envoy discusses government's latest proposal re north/east with Tamil Tigers

>> Tigers ramp up agitation campaign in the north/east

>> Defying international monitors, Tigers refuse to vacate military camp

>> The 20th anniversary of Colombo's deadly anti-Tamil riots passes peacefully

>> Flavor of the Peace Process: GSL Customs seizes Tiger propaganda materials, but looks set to release them

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Norwegians review GSL proposal with Tigers  
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12. (C) Discussion of the latest Sri Lankan government proposal on forming an interim administration in the north/east is intensifying. (Note: See Ref D for details of the proposal.) In response to a request from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Norwegian Special Envoy Jon Westborg, who delivered the proposal to the Tigers on July 17, traveled to the LTTE-controlled town of Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka on July 22. While there, Westborg -- in a meeting with LTTE political chief S.P. Thamilselvan -- answered several specific questions about the proposal. In public, Westborg described the meeting as "very positive." In private, he was even more effusive, telling Indian High Commissioner Nirupam Sen that Thamilselvan's initial reaction to the proposal was "quite encouraging."

13. (C) COMMENT: The LTTE probably will need several more weeks to review the proposal before formulating a final response. At this point, the group's reaction seems relatively constructive. The government, in the meantime, has to keep an eye out for reaction in the south. President Kumaratunga and her party, which share a tense cohabitation relationship with the GSL, are hinting that they oppose the proposal, for example. Moreover, some Muslims from the east, worried about LTTE influence in that ethnically mixed region, have already spoken out against it. END COMMENT.

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Tigers stir the pot in the north/east  
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14. (C) While their reaction to the latest peace proposal has been relatively positive, the Tigers continue to ramp up tensions on the ground in the north/east. Two recent incidents highlight the group's latest agitation campaign. In the first, a clearly marked vehicle belonging to the Norwegian-run Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was pelted with rocks on July 21 as it traveled near Batticaloa in the east. No one was injured in the incident, which was almost certainly perpetrated by pro-LTTE Tamils. In the second incident, GSL Minister of Rehabilitation J. Jayawardena was prevented from attending a European Union-sponsored ceremony held in Jaffna. An unruly mob consisting of students and suspected LTTE cadres jostled Jayawardena, forcing him to flee the scene.

15. (C) COMMENT: As is a ritual with the group, the Tigers deny any involvement in any sort of intimidation, though the incidents described above bear all the

hallmarks of LTTE tactics (use of crowds that melt away, etc.). It is not clear why the Tigers appear to be turning up the heat in the north/east at this time. The group has made clear that it is angry over the recent arrest of several of its cadre by government security forces, however. (Note: The government says the cadre were illegally carrying weapons.) The fact that a SLMM vehicle was attacked is also very bad news. This is the first time the monitors have been involved in such an incident. (Note: The incident may be linked to the worsening LTTE-SLMM relationship described below.) END COMMENT.

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LTTE defies Monitors on Camp  
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16. (SBU) A LTTE-constructed camp near Trincomalee in the east continues to be the subject of controversy. In comments made to the press on July 23, SLMM Deputy Chief Hagrup Haukland lashed out at the Tigers, stating that the LTTE must remove the so-called "Wan Ela" camp. (Note: After a recent land survey, the SLMM determined that the camp encroaches on government-controlled territory -- see Ref D for additional background.) Haukland, who had also hit out hard against the LTTE on this matter last week, underscored that the group must comply with SLMM rulings, per its acceptance of the February 2002 ceasefire accord. For their part, the Tigers have refused to vacate the camp, asserting that it is located in a zone controlled by its forces.

17. (C) COMMENT: The monitors are clearly growing more exasperated with the LTTE day-by-day. The SLMM undoubtedly feels insulted that it is not being listened to, hence Haukland's increasingly shrill comments to the press. Mission has spoken to SLMM representatives, and they say that they are trying to manage the controversy and make sure that it does not lead to a complete breakdown in ceasefire monitoring. The solution to the problem seems simple; the LTTE should withdraw. It is not yet clear, how far the Tigers want to press this matter, however. Up to now, LTTE has by and large tried to maintain fairly good relations with the monitors. END COMMENT.

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Quiet Anniversary of Deadly Riots  
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18. (SBU) The 20th anniversary of the July 1983 riots in Colombo passed peacefully in Sri Lanka. The riots -- which started on July 23, 1983 and lasted several days -- led to the deaths of hundreds of Tamils, with thousands driven from their homes. The local press ran some stories on the riots, but there was no official government ceremony. The one incident that seemed to be linked to the anniversary was an attempt by some Tamils to put up a statue of a deceased LTTE fighter in Jaffna on July 23. The pro-LTTE group was interrupted by government security forces and fled the scene with the statue. No one was injured in the incident. (Note: The statue was of Charles Anthony, a LTTE squadron leader, who was killed during the July 1983 attack on government forces that triggered the Colombo riots. Anthony was a close associate of LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran.)

19. (SBU) COMMENT: Most observers date the 1983 riots as the start of the ethnic conflict. Certainly, there is little doubt that the riots divided the Sinhalese-Tamil communities in a very profound way. The GSL has made some effort to come to terms with the killing of so many of its citizens; President Kumaratunga, for example, ordered a commission to examine what happened and put together a report. The sad fact, however, is that no one has ever been charged for the mayhem that took place. As for the LTTE, the group has used the event as an effective recruiting tool with Tamils. It has also on occasion launched deadly attacks, such as that on Colombo's airport in July 2001, to "commemorate" what took place. END COMMENT.

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The Case of the LTTE's Propaganda Materials  
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10. (C) In our flavor of the peace process section: Sri Lankan customs officials working at Colombo port recently seized two shipping containers headed for the LTTE-controlled Wanni region. In taking the action, the customs officials asserted that the containers -- with contents listed as "stationery" -- included LTTE flags, key chains, LTTE magazines, and stickers. Of special note, were maps depicting areas of the north and east as a separate LTTE-controlled entity ("Eelam"). It is not clear where the containers were shipped from and in whose name, but they are believed to have been ordered

by the LTTE's propaganda department. The latest word is that customs plans to release the material because -- under the terms of the ceasefire accord -- the GSL has no grounds to hold them as contraband.

11. (SBU) COMMENT: Before the advent of the peace process in December 2001, the type of materials seized at the port would have been immediately destroyed by the GSL. Now, with the peace track months old, the transshipment of such "propaganda" items is a relatively ho-hum affair. (Note: Some groups skeptical of the peace process complained about the materials, but did not gain much traction and clammed up.) In general, as far as the GSL is concerned, materials of a non-warlike nature can be provided to the LTTE, including those that are basically political in nature. (Note: That said, there are clearly lines that cannot be crossed: earlier this month, the government complained that LTTE cadre were showing videos of past war exploits to potential recruits in the east. The SLMM agreed with the government that this type of LTTE activity was provocative and inappropriate.) END COMMENT.

12. (U) Minimized considered.

ENTWISTLE